

JITTE 3-5 THE BEBELLJON IN KENT  
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on pikes and accompanied the march of the rebels from day to day. These first acts were done against the King's officers ; but henceforward the Bising was principally directed against the social grievances from which villeins and labourers suffered. It was, as Walsingham described it, a Bising of ' the rustics whom we call serfs or bondsmen, together with the other rural inhabitants of Essex, who began to riot for their liberty and to be peers of their lords, and to be held in servitude to no man.'<sup>1</sup>

In Kent the insurrection began a few days later. The men of Essex had sent messengers there to invite support, in accordance with the plan of co-operation framed by the \* Great Society.' Whether the message arrived or did not arrive before the Kentish Bising had begun, whether it had any effect or none in hastening the outbreak there, the rebellion along the south shore of the lower Thames was as rapid and spontaneous as on the north. It was on June 3 that Simon de Burley, a knight of the King's household, rode into Gravesend with two of the King's soldiers at his heels. Unlike Bampton, he came on private business ; there was a runaway serf of his settled in the town. The men of Gravesend came together to hear him, and admitted that his claim could not be disputed. "Wishing to save their neighbour from a return to bondage, they proposed to compound for his freedom. Burley refused to take less than the ruinous sum of 300Z., which of course could not be raised. After sharp words had passed, he succeeded in carrying the man off to prison in Bochester Castle, further down the river; but the country began to rise behind his back."<sup>2</sup>

This incident was only one of many stimulants now at work in Kent. The poll-tax commissioners were busy there. When they urged that the collection made in the winter was obviously imperfect, if compared with the amount of previous poll-taxes, they were met by the reply that there had been a great mortality in Kent during the last two years.<sup>3</sup> Regarding this answer as insufficient if not false, they proceeded with their duty. John Leg himself had come down, and wae

<sup>1</sup> Wals., i. 454.    \* H. #., 511,    <sup>a</sup> Cont. Eulog., 351.